



ISSANJI

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

57 Hartford Street, San Francisco, California, 94114. (415) 863-2507

- SPRING 1997 -

HSZC is a neighborhood Zen Temple offering a regular practice schedule in the Castro district. It is also called Issanji, "One Mountain Temple", after its founder Issan Dorsey Roshi. The center was started in 1980 to provide a practice place for gay men, lesbians and other sentient beings. The resident teacher is the retired Abbot Zenshin Philip Whalen, who is available for dokusan (practice interviews) by appointment.

What is Lay Initiation, Monk's Ordination, and Transmission?

by Zenshin Philip Whalen

It's all a matter of how people want to practice. If it's in your being to latch on to what this teaching is about and how to perform it, then you don't need anything else. You are a person who comes around to practice. But it's often more comfortable for people to say, "I want to belong to the club." So then you sign up to have lay initiation or jukai which means taking laymen's vows and manufacturing a rakusu which the teacher inscribes with your new Buddhist name and gives back to you in a ceremony.

Then you go about your practice, ideally with some feeling of support coming from the ceremony, and from the making and wearing of the rakusu. Some

feeling that you are not isolated from other practitioners or from ordinary folks either. You have decided to take on the practice of zazen as an important part of your life. Through zazen you can gradually get a grip on what is and start unhitching from attachments. And maybe having this lay initiation is a reminder of how to get along.



The business of being unsui, an ordained monk, is a heavier proposition. If you decide that is going to be your life then your hair is removed. You receive a new name and a set of eating bowls called oryoki, a bowing cloth, and an okesa which is a big robe that goes around your shoulders like a toga. Then there you are, you can start becoming a monk. When I was made a monk on February 3rd, 1973, I had thought to feel some kind of change, but nothing happened. I just had new clothes on and no hair. So what was it about?

And what it was and is about is the necessity that I feel to practice. I believe in this system of Buddhism and feel it is

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necessary for me to practice it. I practice for other people who can't or won't do it. And if it does me some good that's nice and, if not, it doesn't matter. What's important is that the practice be performed and that I encourage other people to do the same thing. Get in there and sit, see how it feels, see how you feel in this practice. It may not work for you, but you are going to hang onto it anyway and of course it is already empty. What you've got is a formal emptiness, an empty formality.

If you mess around in an outfit for a while, at some point the teacher says, "I want to give you dharma transmission." It is a very elaborate ceremony and involves what in Tibetan terms are called "empowerments", literally, and you do get changed. You and your teacher get it together to where you are seeing the same thing in the same direction, if only for a moment. You are joined to the Buddhist lineage. And through my teacher, Baker Roshi, I was joined to Suzuki Roshi's lineage.

At the end of it all, all we have is this funny Zen Buddhist practice, which is no more than telling you to please sit down over there, put your feet up in your lap, hold your hands in a certain way, keep your back straight, and breathe. Then you go on from there. Just things as it is. What we all are. And we are all agreed that we want to sit and I am here to help you however I can - to teach you and do individual interviews with you, and if you want any kind of initiation or ordination, I can do that too.

The thing that I hope is that folks continue with their practice, continue to figure out how to work with it, how to absorb it into their own body and mind, into their own being. This is not a college course, it's a living proposition, here for you to use, to dive into and soak yourself in. What happens next is your own business, and with any luck at all it is also Buddha's business.

So decide what it is you want. If you want to study precepts it's perfectly fine with me, but it's not required. I just presume that people know those things and that's why they are interested in doing this dumb trip. Getting themselves all stuck up to this tar baby. And that's what Buddhism is - a tar baby. It hangs on to you because you won't let go of it. You are running a hazard if you decide to sign up formally, and it's even more foolish to decide you are going to be a monk or a teacher.

HSZC NEWS

Residential Community for HSZC Temple:

What kind of residential community does HSZC want after Maitri AIDS Hospice departs to their new location this summer? Zenshin requested that future temple residents be people who understand the priority of zazen. HSZC President David Prowler asked the Board to begin a dialogue to be presented to the community at the Member's Meeting in May.

We agreed that a House Leader of some kind is needed, to set the practice example and keep the temple and house in order. We would like someone with administrative abilities to complement Zenshin's role as resident teacher. Myo suggested a practice leader be "Someone who is lay or priest ordained, preferably gay or lesbian, with substantial ritual exposure. And references to make sure they aren't running from some diabolical affair at another center."

Marty Kidwell felt that, "Right chemistry, and the issue of personality and maturity are important when choosing a house leader. We are a small temple with minimal resources. Who can we attract?" He recommended exploring closer ties with a larger organization like San Francisco Zen Center.

Myo suggested asking priests from SFZC to help run the temple on a rotational basis, since there has already been some coverage of Saturday morning Dharma talks this way. "Challenges like HSZC are rather rare, we can provide a training opportunity. The question is, how much autonomy is desired? During the Renaissance, a community needing help would go under the umbrella of a larger organization like the Catholic Church. But this can give rise to misgivings about loss of identity of the smaller community."

George Gayuski said, "HSZC is at an important pivotal point. We are making cracks in the paradigm of HSZC and coming back to life as a temple and not just as a hospice. How can we be more responsive to the needs of the Castro community and serve more people. Do we want to be a carbon copy of San Francisco Zen Center? Maybe we serve a different function. For example, the Metropolitan Community Church gives service to many people in a very real way. How can we respond to the genuine spiritual curiosity that people have?

Practice Committee Report:

Zenshin has requested, "Please, no noisy yogic breathing in the zendo during meditation."

Saturday Morning Dharma Talks:

Thanks to the many visiting priests who have joined us to give talks: Vicki Austin, Kokai Roberts, Michael Wenger, Myo, Zenshin, Shunko, Ed Brown, Paramabodhi, Barbara Kohn, and Pat Enkyo O'Hara. Please refer to bulletin board outside the zendo entrance for upcoming speakers.

HIV Sitting Group:

The HIV sitting group has been meeting three times a week since mid-January under the guidance of George Gayuski. A comfortable and informal group.

Zazen Schedule:

Proposal to change evening zazen time from 6:00 pm to 5:40 pm. Let us know how you feel about this. We can discuss it at the Member's Meeting on Sunday, May 20th, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

Business Corner:

In return for a \$20 monthly pledge you will receive a free T-shirt with Zenshin's sketch of the *Bodhisattva in a Bear World*. Books available: *Canoeing Up Cabarga Creek*, Zenshin Philip Whalen's book of Buddhist poems – \$12, and *Street Zen* by Tensho David Schneider – \$13.

Newsletter Production:

Please help us maintain our mailing list. If you move, give us your new address. If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please let us know. Donations for production are much appreciated. Printing and mailing are expensive.

BUDDHIST PRECEPTS & INTERDEPENDENCE

Tenshin Reb Anderson *Excerpts from Sangha Evening at HSZC in November, 1996.*

Someone asked me yesterday if I believed in the Bodhisattva precepts and I said, "It is not so much that I believe in the Bodhisattva precepts, but that I dance

with them. They're my close dancing partner. And it's not so much that I believe in interdependence but more that I dance with that teaching."

Does everyone know what the precepts are? There are sixteen Bodhisattva precepts in the Zen school. First we take refuge in the three treasures – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Next are the Three Pure Precepts: embracing and sustaining regulations and ceremonies; embracing and sustaining all good; embracing and sustaining all beings. The last ten are the Ten Prohibitory Precepts: not killing, not stealing, not misusing sexuality, not lying, not intoxicating others or yourself, not slandering, not praising self at the expense of others, not being possessive, not harboring ill will, and not abusing the three treasures.

These precepts are about unselfishness, but the first thing that usually happens after receiving them is they show us how selfish we are. We realize that we have small confidence in interdependence and big confidence in independence, that we are afraid of selflessness and are really into selfishness. But as this is revealed we start to become enlightened; this is our Buddha nature working to reveal our lack of confidence in our own Buddha nature.

This horrifying realization is the door to the study of self – the self that we really think is existent. Uprightly facing this delusion opens the door to the revelation that we do not have a self that is independent. But first we have to face the fact that we think we do, and this is difficult. There is tremendous anxiety all around that belief in an independent self, and by facing that belief we are brought into direct contact with this most obnoxious thing: Anxiety.

We aren't supposed to believe in an independent self if we are Buddhists, right? So most Buddhists hide it and don't really admit they think they are independent of everybody else. So they are driven by this belief: "Hey, I know I need other people, but deep down I don't think I do. All I really need is for me to win and reproduce. And to hell with the rest of them." Seeing our independent self out in front is to experience tremendous anxiety because it is under threat all the time.

If we keep facing that anxiety we gradually see that our self does not exist by itself. We begin to forget this independent self, and by forgetting this self we start to see the self in a more complete way. Finally we see that the self depends on everybody and everything else and

that the precepts of interdependence flow spontaneously out of this new understanding of yourself. But throughout this process there is a continual manifestation of selfishness too, which when confessed and faced uprightly, drops away. Then we can again receive the precepts. So round and round we go; receiving, confessing, sitting upright, until our interdependence and the precepts are one...

When a person understands how he or she is supported by the entire universe, then the activity that emerges from that being is undeliberated and is always beneficial to others. We become a surface of transmission of interdependence from all of nature, through us, and back out to nature. Everything teaches us, and if we receive that teaching uprightly and absorb that interdependent support, it resonates from us back to our whole environment. Thus, the Bodhisattva precepts help us serve the world of interdependence.

If we understand that our job as a human being is to simply be ourself, without adding, subtracting or gaining anything from this practice, (although you can't do that), then we surrender our selfish activity. We donate ourself to being absorbed into the way we are the same as the person we are meeting. We give ourself over to the world where we are doing everything together. More like giving ourself over to dance, a dance that we can't do alone.

Q: *Like it just starts moving me without me?*

A: Yes, you just get moved around in situations. And what do you get moved around by? Enlightenment. You don't try to figure out beforehand what you are going to do, you let enlightenment push and shove you in the appropriate way. Then the right action comes out of the unmadeness of you being you and you are used by enlightenment in every situation to help people. The intention that realizes Buddhahood is wanting other people to be benefitted first; that's the heart that the Buddha vehicle is trying to develop – and you have that heart already...

Interdependence is hard work, but the Bodhisattva vow is about becoming completely intimate with everybody. Get into suffering, have a hard life and be miserable like everybody else. That's where we find the precepts, in the grisly and embarrassing work of being a human. The way of selflessness unfolds from here.

Pretty soon we see that the selfishness and tightness in the heart feels bad. If we stay present with that feeling we might see that selfishness is the cause of misery, and wanting to drop selfishness is the guts of the desire for enlightenment.

OVERHEARD

Del Carlson on the suggestion that he try logging onto the Internet: "I'm not interested in all that social stuff. I just want to sit meditation and die."

"Wow, I'm so surprised at what a mess my mind is!" said a man after his first sitting period in the special HIV sitting group.

Clay Miller on the Refuge Vow: "Beings are numberless, I vow to count them. Desires are inexhaustible, I am exhausted..."

Tenshin Reb Anderson: "In Zen you learn to give up your position. This is non-attachment." **Suzuki Roshi** said, "Don't move, just die in each moment. Not even enlightenment can help you."

Ron Wickliffe asked if we gave away free videos to new membership pledgers at HSZC. "No, but we can offer a blank audio cassette to listen to while doing zazen," replied **George Gayuski**.

Basho: "The shell of a cicada; It sang itself Utterly away."

CONFIDENCE IN OUR ORIGINAL NATURE

Furyu Nancy Shroeder HSZC Sangha Evening, December, 1996. Excerpts from her talk. *Fu is a Zen priest at Green Gulch Farm and was a volunteer at Maitri AIDS hospice during its second year.*

When you come up with a term like, "original nature," don't think of it as a thing you are going to find. This leaves us with a bit of mystery; if original nature is not a thing, is not locateable, then what's the point of talking about it? But my sense is that's all we've got... There's that famous Zen statement about not mistaking the finger for the moon, and there is a real difference between the word "moon" and that thing up in the sky.

I have a daughter who's three and a half, and every

night when she sees the moon she starts to shake, so I take her outside. This is a daily amazement on her part and I've started feeling some connection to the moon that I never had before, through her. This reaction to the moon, to me, is a good example of the quality of our search. What we are looking for is something like that extraordinary sense of wonder or awe she naturally feels towards this object in the sky. And even though she uses the word 'moon,' the power isn't in the word.

I noticed that Suzuki Roshi in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* said that, "original nature" is not something you can approach through your conscious mind. In Zen we are trying to consider what is outside that conscious presence, kind of an invitation to crank it open. In Zen we just sit there, fishing in this unconscious world. So I thought, "What kind of bait do you use for fishing in the unconscious world?" And what came to mind was a big hunk of red meat. And quite literally when we do this practice we practice with our bodies. We set it down somewhere and when we come back it's still there. The mind is very hard to find, very hard to net, but the body is pretty easy to track. So the body is the bait on the hook. And then we fish. And the way we fish in this practice is by sitting still, just like any good fisherman.

Suzuki Roshi said that original mind is a mind that watches, waiting for that fish to break the surface. So we sit with the sense that there is a tremendous presence in the water and accept that on faith rather than by snorkeling or scuba diving. We have faith that there are fish in the water and that we can connect with them. But Suzuki Roshi also said, "Sitting with that conviction doesn't depend on your catching fish or not. You may never experience so-called enlightenment or awakening. You may never be convinced of your own awakening, that's a real possibility."

...The fish is on the hook, but we keep jumping off. But we are the fish! Suzuki Roshi said that the fish and the water are never separate for a moment. There are no fish without the water, there is no us without the air, without each of us. Everything is so altogether, the altogetherness of the present moment. To come back to uprightness, to the situation we are in, is always available.

When you sit still, it is a good place to watch how various states of mind pass away. It's about coming back into relinquishing control. Zazen isn't exactly a relinquishing of control because it takes a lot of control

to just sit there with your thumbs touching. But there is a certain amount of feel and command of your body that enables you to just allow this moment to be. Every once in awhile the tumblers fall into place and everything is OK.

Q: *Katigari Roshi talked about zazen as fishing with a straight hook. There is a part of a koan that says, he is fishing for the fish who turn away from life. Why fish for those kind of fish?*

A: Because of the Bodhisattva vow to help all beings. I went through a long period in my practice craving quiet and peace, and in a sense, death. And I was very resistant to disturbance... Dogen's death poem said, "Jump live into the Yellow River," and of course that's the only way you can get into it. We can't die before we die, the only way into death is alive. So don't rush it, be alive right up to that moment.

I know friends who have found some self-contentment through their practice, but then the self-concern needs to go or else you start to rot. You can get really bogged down in refining your life and your practice. Now that you got it, keep it whole and pass it on, because your next step of development comes from offering to others whatever help you can. But helping others is tricky. My daughter can really stop me in my tracks. She uses a walker to get around. My thing is like, I'll do anything to help her. And she often says, "Don't touch me, leave me alone."

MAITRI AIDS HOSPICE REPORT

Relocation Updates: After 16 years of the AIDS epidemic, new treatment therapies are producing dramatic health improvements for those living with HIV and AIDS. While giving a sense of hope to many, these new therapies must be administered in a comprehensive primary care context, so many AIDS-service organizations, such as Maitri, are experiencing major redefinitions of their roles. Maitri, fortunately, will no longer be solely an AIDS hospice. Its doors are now open to hospice clients with other terminal diagnoses. And at the new location, Maitri will expand its range of services to meet the long-term AIDS care needs of both

new and existing clients.

Donations for 401 Duboce have been sluggish in the elated wake of hopefulness. In February, Maitri accepted a substantial grant from the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in order to complete construction. The project is scheduled to be finished May 1st. The wiring is close to being finished, the roofing is complete, and the walls are going up. Maitri plans to move from HSZC by July 1st.

Meanwhile, the work continues. Tové Beatty, the Maitri Volunteer Coordinator said, "We straddle the fence between hopeful headlines and stark reality." Please remember those who died here the past few months: Joanne, Anthony, Stephen, James, Steven, Jack, Lesline, and Arthur. Also, Maitri needs volunteers to give one-on-one support to individual residents on a regular buddy-like basis. Contact Tové: 863-8508. Please welcome new residents; Richard and Mark.

A GLIMPSE OF VAJRAYANA FORMS AND TECHNIQUES

Venerable Robina Courtin *Excerpts from her talk at HSZC's Sangha Evening in February.*

Whether we simply sit still, or we practice extensive purification practices from the Tibetan tradition like prostrations, visualizations, mandalas, and mantras – if we do it for the purpose of transforming our own minds so that we can be useful to others then there will be benefit, then results will come.

In the Tibetan tradition which I am part of, there are thousands of meditation techniques but essentially two main modes of meditating. First, there is stabilization meditation where you learn to basically concentrate and not be scattered all over the place. And the extent to which you can develop more concentrated and subtle levels of the mind is the extent to which you can be successful in the second mode of meditation, where you develop insight "into how things are."

The extent to which we don't see "things as they are" is the extent to which we suffer and have difficulties with yourself and with others, due to wrong conceptions stuck in our minds. The purpose is the same whatever

practice you do: to shift, to change, to strip away this defense, this built-up view of who we think we are. And according to the type of person we are and the type of mind we have, we find the methods that work best for each of us and do those.

In the Vajrayana tradition, one of the main methods for getting rid of this limited sense of "I" is to visualize oneself as one of the different Buddha forms, whose fully awakened energy manifests in various aspects for the sake of the practitioner – peaceful, wrathful, male, female, etc. These deities are simply different ways of expressing the energy that might suit our particular personality, a method to use for transforming who we are into our own limitless potential.

So you take your potential and visualize it, not as this concrete body of blood and bones, but in a more purified, subtle and blissful way. You transform yourself by imagining going beyond your usual sense of I. One lama told me to see myself as Manjushri, a 16 year-old male with an orange body holding a sword who represents cutting-through wisdom. I said, "It's bad enough being who I am." And he said, "What makes you think you are any more real than Manjushri? You are just clinging to a sense of who you think you are."

In this esoteric approach we take all the human qualities like attachment, anger, pride and desire – and then use them. Ultimately things don't have a good or bad nature, it is only the limited mind that imposes this. When you know that experientially then you can use all this energy. One Buddha aspect, for example, is called Vajrayogini, a red female who is very blissful and her energy represents transformed desire. By visualizing Vajrayogini we use this energy to enhance what she represents in yourself. You take this energy, absorb it into you, and identify feeling inseparable from it. Become one with it. Then you dissolve everything into vast, empty space.

So we take all this stuff, initially in a formalized kind of way, and then learn to go to the essential purpose of it. After you've removed all the delusion, then there is this enlightened consciousness, beyond male, beyond female, beyond anything. It is totally liberated from all pollution and literally pervades wherever there is reality. All conceptions have been removed and demystified, so one knows the mind of all living beings.

And when we lessen the delusion of "I," then compassion increases automatically, a spontaneous and

huge wish for the happiness of others, that their suffering be removed. This awakening consciousness only wishes to get enlightened in order to serve other beings, without limitation. There is a level of compassion which also asks, "What can I do personally to remove their suffering?" This is what the Dalai Lama calls, "a sense of universal responsibility." This empathy has to be developed, it comes only with the removal of one's own ego-grasping and then by actively practicing love and compassion.

So this is how we work; we develop wisdom on the one side and compassion on the other. Like I said though, I don't know much about Zen meditation. I think a Zen practitioner would find these practices very busy and get exhausted! But it's according to your own personality and karma, right? So the bottom line is, if it works you do it, and if it doesn't, you don't. You get the greatest master from the Zen tradition and the greatest yogi or yogini from the Tibetan tradition and you find the same person; direct, uncomplicated, full of compassion and wisdom. So that is the essence of it.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Your views are always welcome. Next newsletter deadline, Sept. 1st. Contact Jennifer Birkett (415) 647-0465, or write c/o HSZC, Attn. Newsletter. Or E-mail: HSZC@AOL.COM

GROUPS MEETING AT HSZC

HIV Sitting Group: For those with HIV, caregivers, lovers, and friends. Meets Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 10:15 am. Meditation instruction offered in secular terms. Two ten minute sittings with a break in-between, plus informal discussion. Contact: George Gayuski (415) 861-6160.

Dharma Sisters: A sitting group for new and experienced lesbian practitioners. Meets Tuesday nights at 7:25 pm for a half hour meditation, followed by discussion. Contact: Sharon (415) 285-8850.

San Francisco Mindfulness Community: Students of Thich Nhat Hanh meet the 2nd and 4th Sunday from 9:30 am until noon. Monday nights: 7:30 to 9:00 pm. Contact: Avi Magidoff at (415) 252-8452.

HSZC TEMPLE SCHEDULE

MORNING: Monday through Friday

5:45 am Zazen
6:15 am Interval
6:20 am Zazen
6:45 am Service

EVENING: Monday through Friday

6:00 pm Zazen
6:40 pm Service

SATURDAY:

8:00 am. Beginner's zazen instruction by appointment.
9:10 am. Zazen
10:00 am. Dharma Talk, followed by tea and discussion. Donation to support the temple is appreciated. See Bulletin Board for the scheduled speakers.

DINNER is open to the community on MONDAY nights after zazen. \$5 donation suggested.

MONTHLY MEMORIAL SERVICE for Temple founder Issan Dorsey Roshi is held on the 6th day of each month.

MEMBERSHIP: Practicing Members sit regularly, may attend practice interviews with Zenshin and contribute a suggested \$40 per month. Those who wish to support the temple are encouraged to become Annual Members who contribute \$20 or more a year and will receive newsletters by mail. This is your temple. Whatever you can give is appreciated.

SANGHA EVENINGS

Informal presentations by teachers from other Dharma centers and sometimes other Buddhist traditions, followed by discussion on the third Tuesday

evening of each month. Everyone is invited to meet with these teachers, including those not particularly oriented to Buddhism. A donation to support the temple is appreciated.

Tuesday, May 20th; 7:45-9:00 pm. Turning Towards the Unintended: with Tundra Wind, a priest ordained in the Chogye tradition of Korean Zen. Our initial interest in Buddhist practice generally arises out of a sense of something not working properly in our lives. We often have preconceived notions about practice itself which take a long time to give up. How can we learn to "turn towards the unintended" more readily, and allow practice to reveal itself, free from our own expectations?

Tuesday, June 17th, 7:45-9:00 pm. TBA.

Tuesday, July 15th; 7:45-9:00 pm. An Overview of Tibetan Medicine: with Doctor Dickey Pardon Nyerong-

gsha. Tibetan medicine is one of the oldest form of medicine practiced today. Many illnesses that Western medicine considers serious or even lethal are effectively managed by Tibetan physicians through diet and organic medicine. This tradition takes aim at the cause of illness which are seen to be produced by imbalances between the body and mind. Dr. Nyerongsha practices in San Francisco and Boulder.

ANNUAL MEMBER'S MEETING

Our annual member's meeting will be held at HSZC on Sunday, May 18th from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. We will be discussing important changes and opportunities connected with Maitri AIDS Hospice's coming move this summer. New Board Members will be elected and refreshments will be served.

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